



## LAKE CHESDIN 2005



Lake Chesdin is a 3,100-acre water supply reservoir on the Chesterfield-Dinwiddie County line administered by the Appomattox River Water Authority. Chesdin is a productive lake that, for many years, has offered excellent largemouth bass fishing, good crappie fishing (both black and white) in spring and fall, and a great channel catfish fishery. It contains a diverse community of fish as evidenced by the 24 species that were collected in gill nets during fall, 2004.

Historically, Lake Chesdin has been considered an excellent bass fishing lake. According to some anglers the bass fishing has gotten tougher recently. This may be due to a combination of things. First and foremost, on average, the weather has not been conducive to good fishing during the last two years. We've had much higher than average rainfall which has caused water levels and water clarity to fluctuate regularly. Fishing for bass is generally better when conditions are somewhat stable for a period of days. Second, our sampling does indicate that the numbers of quality and preferred size bass in the lake has fallen since 1999. However, the electrofishing catch rates observed in 1999 were, by far, the highest ever seen. So, a drop-off in fishing success was expected. It should be noted that fishing pressure may have increased as well. Although this should not have caused a meaningful increase in bass harvest because bass anglers release virtually all of their catch, it could have made bass more wary and harder to catch or re-catch. Largemouth bass are generally not collected well using gill nets. But, those that were captured during fall, 2004 gill netting were very plump and healthy looking. Department biologists will be monitoring this population closely for any changes.

Lake Chesdin has been known in the past for its crappie fishery. But, the average size of crappie appears to be down in recent years. Only three crappie exceeding 10 inches were collected in gill nets during fall, 2004. Based on data collected during 2004, growth rates were good through age 3, but were relatively anemic thereafter. Virtually no growth was observed after age 6, and 8 to 11-year-old crappie were only averaging approximately 8.5 inches in length. The most likely cause is the very abundant white perch population that has developed in Chesdin during the last 10 years. These fish are undoubtedly competing with crappie for food.

Although the average size is down, there is still a good population of bluegill in Lake Chesdin according to electrofishing data collected in 2003. Fishing for them along the abundant beds of water willow should be productive.

Due to production constraints in recent years, walleye were only stocked in Chesdin when surplus fish were available. However, walleye survival has been good enough to produce numerous fish in the 4-7-pound range in gill net samples. As a result, the Department has decided to elevate Chesdin to a higher priority water for walleye stocking

beginning in 2005. Anglers should see an increase in walleye abundance in the coming years.

Lake Chesdin has never been known for its striped bass, although an occasional large fish is caught. Gill netting has never produced a decent sample of stripers in any year since stocking began. As a result, striper stocking is being discontinued, but, this is being offset by the increase in walleye stocking mentioned above.

Lake Chesdin has an awesome population of channel catfish. They were very abundant in gill net samples, and excellent eating-size fish from 2-4 pounds were common. Numerous fish in the 4-6-pound range were also collected. These fish were typically very fat and healthy looking. Anglers are encouraged to take advantage of this under-utilized resource.

White perch is another under-utilized species. They have become more abundant in Lake Chesdin during the last ten years, probably at the expense of the bluegill and crappie populations. In fact, they were the most abundant fish in the gill nets during fall, 2004. White perch are common everywhere in the lake, and they are easy to catch on worms or grass-shrimp. If you want to try catching them on artificial bait, use something small like a 1/16-oz lead-head twister-tail jig because they have small mouths. A few of the perch in gill net samples exceeded 10 inches. If you've never eaten white perch, try it, it's delicious!

Due to the opening of a fish lift in Brasfield Dam (AKA Lake Chesdin Dam) during spring, 2005, anadromous fish will have access to the upper Appomattox River for spawning for the first time in many years. Although relatively few shad and herring are expected to use the lift during this first year of operation, a good spring fishery may develop in the upper river if spawning runs improve over time.